

Omaha World-Herald

2017 BROUGHT ALL KINDS OF WEATHER — PLUS AN ECLIPSE! — BUT COLD WILL BE THE STORY OF YEAR’S END MIDLANDS



Troopers say they overpaid \$12 million

Pension lawsuit against the state tries to recoup funds, drags into a seventh year

By JOE DUGGAN
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

LINCOLN — A six-year legal battle between the state and 400 current and former Nebraska state troopers now has another big number attached to it: \$12 million. That’s roughly how much the troopers say they were overcharged for pension contributions between 2008 and 2016. The troopers have been pursuing a series of lawsuits since 2011 to recoup those funds and end what they consider an unconstitutional breach of contract by the state. “We want an equitable resolution,” said Trooper Kurt Frazey, legislative liaison for the State Troopers Association of Nebraska. “We’d rather not go to trial. At the end of the day, we’re all taxpayers.” At stake is the Nebraska Legislature’s ability to adjust pension contribution rates by troopers, which is allowed under state law, said Mark Laughlin, the Omaha attorney hired to defend the state. “Their attempts years later to

See Troopers: Page 3

Governor will seek State Patrol changes in 2018. **Midlands**

2 DAYS LEFT TO DONATE

The Goodfellows 2017 campaign continues through Sunday. To be part of this year’s drive, make your donation online by that day or get your check in the mail in time to be postmarked Dec. 31. **Online:** Omaha.com/goodfellows **Mail:** World-Herald Goodfellows 1314 Douglas St. Suite 600, Omaha, NE 68102 **Today’s donations, Page 2B**

‘Gaming disorder’ set to gain global status as illness

THE MIAMI HERALD

The World Health Organization is poised to officially recognize that playing video games too often could be a mental health disorder. The WHO is planning to add the term “gaming disorder” to its official list of diseases in 2018, according to a draft of the organization’s 2018 International Classification of Diseases. The WHO’s description of gaming disorder says that those who are afflicted are characterized by a pattern of persistent or recurrent gaming behavior, either on digital devices like smartphones or video-gaming offline on machines. According to the WHO’s description, you may have a problem if your symptoms include impaired control over gaming — you

See Gaming: Page 2

She made her farmhouse dream a reality and now creates furniture for others



RYAN SODERLIN/THE WORLD-HERALD

Ashley Welch works on a clock at Salt Creek Farmhouse Furniture, her business in Ashland. At top left, Joe Kasel is one of four employees of the business. At top right, a sketchbook includes some of Welch’s designs. Watch a video online at Omaha.com/grace.

BUILDING A FUTURE



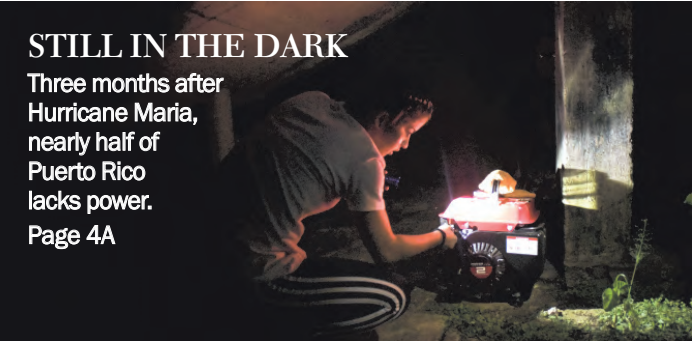
Erin Grace
COLUMNIST

ASHLAND, Neb. — Ashley Welch can see things that aren’t there. Then, like a magician, she makes them appear in real life. Take her farmhouse. The 35-year-old mother of four could see her family in one of those wood-sided, porch-wrapped farmhouses. So she and handy husband Nolan built one.

Take her farmhouse furniture. She could see her new sunlit home, all 4,000 square feet of it, filled with chunky, simple-lined wood pieces. She could not see paying for them. So she learned how to use a saw and built nearly every piece of furniture — minus couches and mattresses but plus the mantel and kitchen island. Take her business. Welch could see herself running a business and tried a bakery. When that closed, she sold a coffee table she’d built

to a friend and started Salt Creek Farmhouse Furniture. And take the bigger business. Welch could see a wood shop with a second floor for entertaining. So, when the business took off, she and Nolan built a place big enough to drive three cars into and hired four employees, and now the place hums with a project list 50 to 70 orders long destined for buyers across the country. Welch has no formal training in

See Grace: Page 2



STILL IN THE DARK
Three months after Hurricane Maria, nearly half of Puerto Rico lacks power. Page 4A

Oriental Trading’s CEO led turnaround

Sam Taylor, who pitched the company to Buffett, dies more than a year after being diagnosed with brain cancer. **Money**

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Stenberg seeks to postpone tax benefit for private K-12 tuition

By PAUL HAMMEL
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

LINCOLN — Families wishing to fully cash in on the recently approved federal tax benefit on K-12 private and parochial school tuition might need to hold their horses. And they may be holding those horses for a while. State Treasurer Don Stenberg, whose office administers the 529 savings plans, said the Nebraska Legislature must enact enabling legislation before taxpayers can

take advantage of any state tax breaks made available by Congress for private K-12 education. While federal tax benefits for K-12 education are now available, Stenberg said he wants to put off implementation of the new state tax break until 2020 to avoid any adverse fiscal impact on the state budget. “We all know we’re in a revenue crunch,” Stenberg said. “I think it will make some sense to push that out beyond the current biennium.” See Tax break: Page 3

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